ELL Reader

Social Studies

Genre	Build Background	Access Content	Extend Language
Expository Nonfiction	• Seeing-eye Dogs • Training and Helping • Farewells	• Labels • Definitions	• Adjectives

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Social Studies

Raising a Seeing-Eye Dog

by Anton Economos



Illustrated by Larry Johnson





Raising a Seeing-Eye Dog

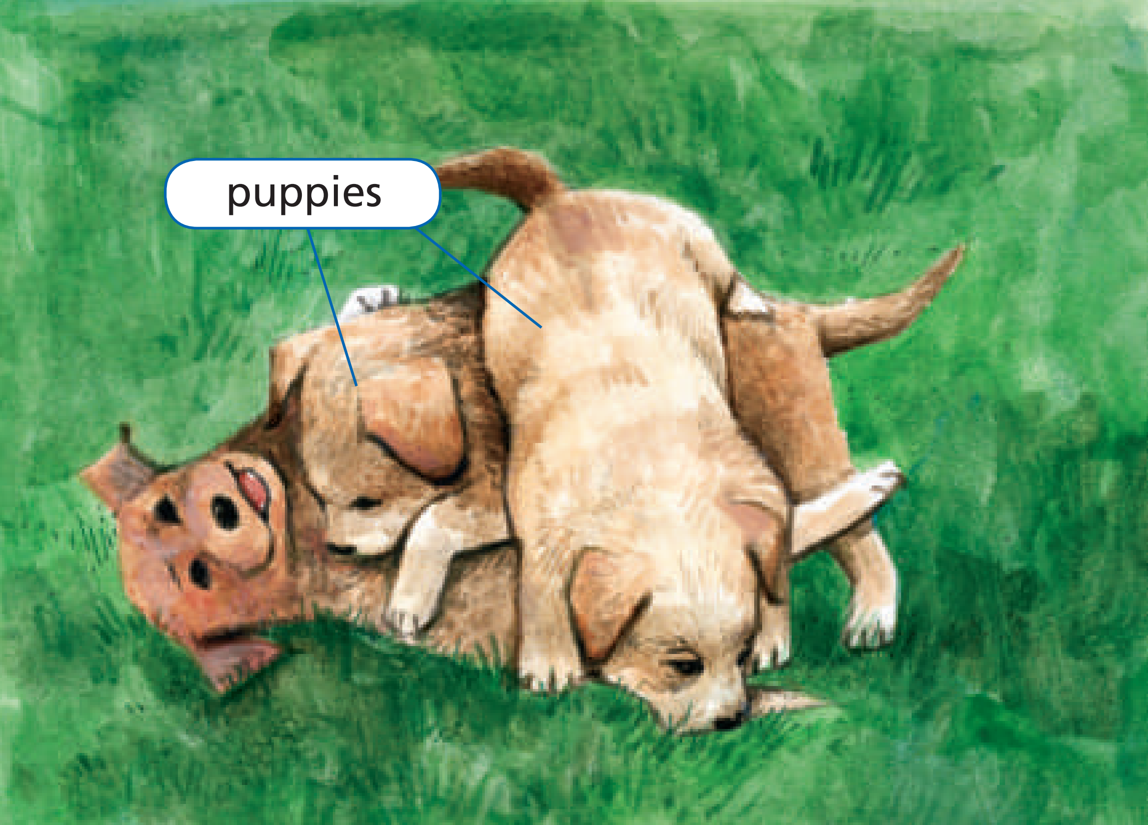
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Look at these little puppies. They tumble and play. Many of them will become family pets. One of them will become a working dog. He will not play puppy games or do foolish things. He will be trained to be a seeing-eye dog. Seeing-eye dogs help blind people. They help blind people to live their daily lives. They guide people. A seeing-eye dog acts like a person's eyes.

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trained: taught

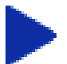
blind: not able to see





Training a seeing-eye dog takes time. The first step is for the puppy to live with a family. Families that train seeing-eye dogs are called "puppy raisers." They will raise the puppy and give him a loving home. As the puppy grows, he will learn what it is like to be part of a family. He will learn what it is like to live in the world around him.









Raising a seeing-eye dog is a family project. Everyone in the family must care for and work with the puppy. They want him to grow to be a healthy, friendly seeing-eye dog.

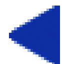
Puppies can be shy in their new homes. A boy may want to make friends with the puppy. The boy is gentle with the puppy. He talks to him quietly. The boy takes time showing the puppy what he wants the dog to do. When the puppy obeys, it is helpful to praise him.



Taking care of a puppy is hard work. The puppy must be brushed each day. He must be fed three times a day. He must have fresh water.

The family can take the puppy on long walks in the neighborhood. He is trained to obey simple commands. He learns to sit, to stop, and to come. It is important for the puppy to obey the commands if he is to become a good seeing-eye dog.









After the puppy has learned simple commands, he can go everywhere with the family. He wears a harness. The harness will help to guide a blind person better. The puppy wears a jacket. The jacket says that he is training to be a seeing-eye dog. It tells people that he is not a pet. He is a working dog. With the jacket, the puppy can go places that other dogs cannot go. He can go into restaurants, supermarkets, and shopping centers. He can travel on buses and trains. It is important for the puppy to get to know these places.

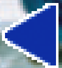
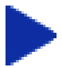






Puppies spend one year with the puppy raisers. Then they are ready to finish their training. The family brings the dog to a special school. It is a proud day for the family. They know the dog will soon be helping a blind person.

At the school, the dog will learn more commands such as “find the table” or “go to the elevator.” He also will learn to tell when there is danger. He will help the blind person avoid the danger. The dog will learn to tell if a doorway is too narrow to pass through. He will learn to tell when it is safe to cross a street.





After four months at the school, the dog is ready to meet his new owner. This dog's new owner is a blind woman. The trainer tells this person about the dog. She tells the woman about his size, his color, and the kind of training the dog has had.

For the next four weeks, the dog and his owner will work together. They will get to know each other. They will become friends and partners. The dog will help her move around safely. That's what this seeing-eye dog has learned to do.



Talk About It

1. Why do seeing-eye dogs need to learn about stores, restaurants, trains, and buses?
2. Why are seeing-eye dogs called working dogs and not pets?

Write About It

3. On a separate sheet of paper, write about three ways that seeing-eye dogs help blind people.

Extend Language

The word *friendly* is an adjective. It tells what kind of dog the puppy will be. To help a person, a seeing-eye dog must be like a friend.

What other adjectives in the story tell about the dog?

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